A MODEL FOR LIFE CYCLE RECORDS MANAGEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this session is to update an old Records Management concept; the management of records according to the records life cycle. Accordingly, we are presenting a new version of the Records Management life cycle model and its associated elements. This presentation is geared to the beginning and intermediate Records Manager. For more experienced Records Managers, it can act as a back-to-basics refresher.

What is the records life cycle? The basic concept is that every record progresses through three phases; a record is created, is used and maintained, and is dispositioned. It is very easy to understand and to relate to real life. Sometimes called cradle to grave; birth to death; beginning to end; whatever you call it, the records life cycle is an old, well-established, well-documented concept in Records Management. It is a classic and timeless theme. It can be related equally to hard copy records, electronic records, records with a life span of one week and records with a life span of 100 years.

The term and concept of the “records life cycle” date back to the beginning of the United States’ National Archives and are nearly 60 years old. Given the relatively young age of our profession, this is quite an old concept. One of the U. S. Federal government’s first professional Archivists, Philip Brooks, published a paper in 1940 introducing the life cycle concept. Brooks also designed a model that showed the life cycle as a straight line from creation to disposition.

In more current literature, the records life cycle is frequently depicted as a closed circle. This circular model is instinctive to most life cycle concepts. But its application in depicting the records life cycle shows a closed loop from disposition back to creation. This continuum is false - there is no link from disposition to creation - records do not get “reincarnated.”

In this presentation, we update the very old straight line model and the more current circular model with a new model that essentially combines the two. Our model portrays Records Management as having a distinct straight-line beginning, a circular use and maintenance phase, and a distinct straight-line end. Our presentation maps Records Management Program elements and activities against the phases depicted in the model. We believe that this new records life cycle model is an enhanced physical representation of the process. At the end of the presentation we will be giving each of you an additional handout that you can take back to your offices as a reminder of the model that we hope will help you stay focused on the Records Management big picture. This presentation is designed to help put all of the specialized Records Management topics that you have heard about all week in the perspective of the records life cycle.
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The fundamental premise of life cycle Records Management is that: a) Records have a life cycle and b) That records should be managed throughout their life cycle. There are many reasons for managing records throughout their life cycle; a few key ones include:

1. The Records Manager will gain greater understanding of the records’ use in the organization and will improve his/her ability to appraise them for retention and archival reasons. Early involvement by Records Management also reduces risk of premature destruction of records with long-term value.

2. The Records Manager will gain greater control over costs and proliferation of records. Standardization of storage equipment, filing systems, procedures, etc. throughout the life cycle can pay for the Records Management Program.

3. The Records Manager will develop greater control over the organization and use of records in their active period. Organizations need to devote time and energy to managing records throughout the life cycle instead of at the end, which is where traditionally Records Managers are just starting to manage their organizations’ records.

2.0 CREATION

The facilitation of later phases in the life cycle is the primary reason to manage records creation. The creation stage of the records life cycle is where all records are “born.” How they come into being varies. In addition to those records created within an organization, some are also received from external sources. Once received by an organization, these records are managed as part of the Records Management program. These records, rather than being “born,” are “adopted.”

Records take many forms such as reports, forms, letters, E-mail messages, other electronic records, and directives. Records are created to serve a business purpose; there’s a basic assumption that they are needed to conduct the business of the organization. The treatment of a record once it is created and the length of its retention period are based on its value to the organization, but managing records from the point of creation provides the organization with effective control over the records during the time that they have the most value to the organization rather than only at the inactive stage.

An important aspect of records creation is the identification of the Office of Record. When staff in your organizations know that they have an official record copy, versus a non record copy, it permits the application of an appropriate level of resources to managing the record. File classifications and records retention classifications can be applied up front, saving time and making filing and retrieval of active records more efficient.

Elements of a Records Management Program needed to successfully manage records creation include: directives management, forms management, correspondence management, reports
management, and management of electronic records. Although these program elements are somewhat diverse, they are similar in that they all control or result in the creation of records. Also, the analytical skills that Records Management Program staff must have are the same skills needed to carry out all of these program areas. They belong organizationally in the Records Management Program if the Records Manager is to achieve life cycle records management. These Records Management program elements can have significant positive impact on the daily work of individual employees in our organizations. The people who create records will benefit most from these program elements.

We will now address each of these records creation elements in a little more detail.

2.1 Directives Management

One function of records creation in Records Management is directives management. Directives serve as formal communications of instructions from management to staff. Directives provide clear, standardized instructions on the organization's policies and procedures. Records Management can be well placed to manage a Directives Management program. This can be done as a task of Records Analysts or by dedicated staff who only perform Directives Management. By controlling directives, the quality and usefulness of the directives can be assured. Directives management provides an organized system for the common development, review, approval, and distribution of directives. This process is beneficial because it eliminates confusion caused by inconsistent directives developed independently throughout the organization.

Directives provide a benefit that is frequently overlooked - they describe and identify the records that our organizations create. We can learn much about the records of a functional unit by reading its procedures. Every directive should include a section on records that describes the records created by the process described in the directive as well as specifying the retention period and the office of record of the records generated by the directive.

2.2 Forms Management

Forms Management is another Records Management function that results in the creation of records. Forms are still a wonderfully effective means of collecting information for repetitive and standardized business uses and are a major business document used for gathering, processing, and distributing information. They occupy a large portion of the records produced in most organizations. The review and analysis of forms can prevent duplication of information, prevent duplication of forms, improve the quality of the forms, and ensure that extraneous information is not collected and stored. Simplified forms save time of all form users.
2.3 Correspondence Management

The objective of Correspondence Management is to improve correspondence quality and to facilitate correspondence storage and retrieval, as records. Creation of correspondence equals creation of records, as virtually all correspondence is a record, albeit it is not all equal in value. Usually Correspondence Management creates standardized formats for letter and interoffice memoranda to create uniformity across the organization. The use of form letters should also be controlled to ensure they are routinely reviewed and updated. A system of correspondence control numbers can facilitate filing and retrieval through the use of a standardized but unique number for each item. Finally correspondence control encourages authors to identify their correspondence as record material and to maintain copies accordingly.

2.4 Reports Management

Reports Management is another records program element at the creation stage. Reports are a very important vehicle for management communications. Expensive proliferation and over distribution of reports can go unnoticed by an organization due to the very prevalence of the report as a management tool. It is necessary in Reports Management to justify the existence of every report, purge unnecessary reports, manage distribution on a need-to-know basis, and consolidate reports where possible. The benefit of this control is that the quality is improved and the costs are reduced. In some cases, Reports Management can eliminate unnecessary reports or reduce complexity by providing only essential information to those who really need it. Especially in these times of information overload, Reports Management can perform an important role in reducing the amount of information that reaches individuals in the organization.

2.5 Electronic Records

The creation of human-readable records does not pose an issue for future use since no special devices or technology is required to read them. The opposite is true of electronic records. Creation of electronic records is dependent on the software application, hardware, operating system, media and file formats that make up the computer system.

Because of this, there are special problems related to ongoing retrieval of electronic records with long retention periods. In order to ensure long-term viability of electronic records, documentation needs to be created and retained in hard copy regarding the hardware and software platforms, characteristics of the data and instructions needed to retrieve the data. Furthermore, Records Management should develop a plan for each electronic records system that addresses migration of data to new hardware and software platforms that will ensure the ability to retrieve electronic records and to preserve the data configuration for the full lifetime of the records.
In closing this section regarding the creation phase of the records life cycle, keep in mind that it is very important for Records Managers to be familiar with their organization’s business functions and to understand what records the organization creates. If the Records Manager understands the business functions and each organization’s work products, and is familiar with routinely generated documents, he or she will be more effective in designing and implementing an effective life cycle Records Management Program.

3.0 MAINTENANCE AND USE

The maintenance and use phase is the second stage of the records life cycle. Records that have been generated or received by the organization are now being used and reused to conduct business. The records are active or semi-active. The Records Manager’s prime role in the maintenance and use stage is to provide mechanisms for efficient and effective storage, filing, and retrieval of all records in this stage.

Records remain in the maintenance and use stage until they become inactive. When active, they need to be stored in a record-keeping system that permits retrieval and protects them from loss or damage. The benefit of managing the maintenance and use stage is that record loss is minimized and retrieval time is shortened. The integrity of the record can be assured.

Records Management may take an active role in managing records during this phase through operation of a central file system, or may only provide the systems and procedures for management of records by the line organizations. The Records Management program elements in this stage benefit the records users but also begin to have greater impact on the organization.

3.1 Operating a Centralized Records Management System

Many Records Management organizations manage active records in a centralized records management system. Centralized filing is one of the catalysts that gave birth to the profession. The benefits of centralized systems are: records are located in one controlled location, there are trained staff maintaining the records, there is a charge-out control system that records the location of all records at all times, responsibility for record-keeping is given to assigned staff, there is better utilization of space and equipment, and of course, the records are well protected and managed. Further, all records in the central files center are available to anyone in the organization who needs to access them. The centralized records system maintains the records and organizes them by using a filing system or database so they are easily retrievable. Control over records disposition is also managed. This facilitates transfer of inactive records to inexpensive records center space, protects archival records, and provides for the destruction of records whose retention period has expired.
While our traditional image of a central file is a big room with lots of filing cabinets of hard copy records, today's central file centers often convert records from hard copy to microfilm, microfiche, or electronic images. These are all means of greatly enhancing the ability to retrieve records, reduce storage space, eliminate loss or misfiling of records, and permit inexpensive and efficient dissemination of copies of non-paper media to multiple locations when necessary.

3.2 Individual File Stations

Many records, even in organizations with central filing centers, are kept in individual file stations. Individual file stations can be an effective way to maintain active records because the records are readily available to the single individuals who use them most often. However, due to the cost of office space, in these cases, retention schedules should be rigorously applied and individual file stations should never be used for inactive records. Even with individual file stations, standardized filing systems should be used. This permits transportability of files to others in the case of job changes and permits retrieval of records from file stations when the regular custodian is absent.

3.3 Filing Systems and Equipment

Tools used to manage records during the maintenance and use phase are very important. As you must have seen in the vendor exhibits, there is an enormous choice available of filing equipment and supplies.

Color coding of hard copy files is recommended because it makes the physical act of filing and retrieval more efficient. Color can be used to identify codes, numbers, names, or dates, as appropriate for the filing arrangement in use. Filing and retrieval are done faster and easier through the use of color because of recognition enhancement. Use of color also prevents misfiles. Misfiles stand out because the color pattern is broken. Color can also be used to highlight or prioritize records. Color can represent meanings such as active, inactive, non-record, or proprietary records. Color can be used to distinguish zones or accounts. There are an infinite number of uses for color which may be helpful to use to improve the maintenance of records by enhancing current filing methods.

Filing equipment used in the organization should be standardized to facilitate use and maintenance. Standardized equipment facilitates the transfer of files from one department to another within the organization because the supplies and equipment are interchangeable. Standardization also permits compatibility with filing systems in use. Filing equipment should promote ease of use, be compatible with space availability and space configurations in the organization, and provide the necessary level of security.

Good filing practices should be followed in the maintenance phase to facilitate filing and retrieval, protect records to prepare them for disposition.
3.4 Electronic Records

Use and maintenance of electronic records involves considerations that do not exist with hard copy records. One of these is selection of storage media that ensures the protection of the records for their active life. In addition, there should be a method for authorized users to retrieve records. There are very special issues related to E-mail messages as records that could be the subject of a separate conference altogether. System documentation is an area often overlooked with electronic records. Documentation on the system is necessary for continued use and maintenance of the system but furthermore, is often necessary to verify the authenticity of the records, especially in legal proceedings. The organization may be called upon to prove, through its documentation, that electronic records were created in the normal course of business.

Usually electronic files that we have in desk-top systems such as word processing and spreadsheet systems, are not records and are only used to generate hard-copy records. If the electronic version is the record copy, management of electronic files and directories takes on a new meaning. In such cases, naming conventions act as components of filing systems and should be standardized with directories organized like file folders.

Another tool for creating electronic records is workflow systems. Electronic workflow systems permit the creation of information, task processing and work status reporting. For example: A user can fill out a request electronically, sign it electronically, send it electronically to the next individual who takes action and so forth until all action related is complete. It can tell the sender and receivers the status and location of the item at any time. This is a powerful means of records creation and use and needs to be carefully designed to ensure the handling of the resulting electronic form/data as a record since there generally is no need to make paper printouts.

In closing this section on the records maintenance and use phase in the records life cycle, we want to mention that as much as 80% of the activity on a record occurs in the first 20% of its life. Proper maintenance of records improves control and retrievability over records during the time when they have the greatest business value to the organization.

4.0 DISPOSITION

Disposition of records is the final phase of the records life cycle. For this phase, records retention schedules are written to establish policy on the retention and disposition of records. Records retention ensures that records are retained for the required period; records disposal ensures that records are removed to lowcost storage or destroyed once they become inactive or their value declines. Disposition results in disposal of records, or if they have historical value, their transfer to archival storage. The Records Management organization is responsible for setting retention schedules and making appropriate storage available for inactive and archival records. Records
Management also monitors and/or executes the destruction of records once their retention periods have expired.

The importance of this phase of the life cycle is twofold: 1) proper retention and disposition of records protects the rights and interests of the organization and 2) proper retention and disposition of records is cost-effective with respect to use of space.

Other elements of this phase in the life cycle are the related disciplines of vital records identification and protection and disaster recovery planning. They ensure the continued viability of the organization in the event of a disaster.

4.1 Records Retention Scheduling and Records Disposition

Record retention scheduling is central to the retention and disposition phase of the records life cycle. All groups of records in the organization are inventoried and listed on the records schedule as records series. Records Management performs an appraisal of each records series in which the value of the series to the organization is determined. The appraisal considers laws, regulations, business requirements, and business needs pertaining to the records. These will dictate how long the record must be maintained, both in the active environment of a central file or individual file station, then in inactive storage and finally, in the archives, when applicable. Once recommended retention periods are established, they are reviewed by the source organization and legal counsel.

A common practice in records disposition is to do an annual “purge” of the active filing systems in the office. Using this method, all records are reviewed against the records schedule once a year. Some records are discarded, others boxed and sent to inactive storage, and still others remain in the active filing system. Using this method, the records are reviewed every year but the schedules are generally applied only once when the records have reached the end of their retention period. Another approach is to identify the retention schedule for a record at creation and apply the retention on the record, or during maintenance and use when the retention period can be applied to a file folder, case file, or to an entire filing system. This is beneficial because the record is reviewed only once, at its creation, and does not have to be reviewed every year.

Non record copies that are not covered by retention schedules or that are covered by schedules that say “destroy when no longer needed” can end up staying in file systems indefinitely and can be a liability to the organization that naively believes itself protected since the official record copy was discarded. Because no retention policy requires their destruction at a specific time, and the users know they can discard these items at any time, they tend to get discarded only when the user runs out of filing space. Reference copies should be maintained in a manner that will allow for regular review and purge of the files. Sensitive materials should not be retained beyond the retention period for the record copy.
Scheduling electronic records can be a challenge. As we discussed earlier, documentation needs to be created and retained in hard copy regarding the hardware and software platforms, characteristics of the data and instructions needed to recreate the data. Without such documentation, it is pointless to retain an electronic records system unless the value of the records outweighs the cost of recreating the data. Furthermore, Records Management should develop a plan for each electronic records system that addresses migration of data to new hardware and software platforms that will ensure the ability to recreate electronic records and to preserve the data configuration for the full lifetime of the records. As software and hardware are constantly being upgraded, it is necessary to ensure that electronic records created using obsolete hardware and/or software can still be used throughout their approved retention periods. An anomaly in scheduling electronic records is that the retention period is sometimes longer for electronic records than the period would be for the same records in hard copy. The fact that electronic records can be easily manipulated and occupy less space can make them more valuable for longer-term use than volumes of hard copy records containing the same data would be.

Electronic records in text form with long-term retention requirements can be stored in formats that are not hardware or software dependent, such as in ASCII format. Records in other applications may have to be migrated to subsequent versions of software so that they can continue to be accessed and read.

The storage media itself also must be considered. Some media are not suitable for long-term storage. For example, floppy disks have a life span of only five to ten years. Ironically, most media are replaced by other media due to technology changes before there is any risk of degradation of the data. Non re-writable media such as a WORM optical disk, does not always lend itself to long-term storage because the entire disk must be retained as long as the single record with the longest retention period. This could force the organization to retain records beyond their retention periods, which is not advisable. There are ways to avoid these problems, but they require special planning and usually some cooperation with computer staff.

Other than the exceptions noted above, the issues related to scheduling electronic records are virtually the same as scheduling their paper counterparts.

4.2 Inactive Records Storage

A fundamental element of the retention/disposition phase of the records life cycle is the management and storage of inactive records. These are records that still have value to the organization but are seldom referenced. The Records Management organization has responsibility for implementing a system which moves records from their active file locations to inactive storage. Inactive storage may be offsite in a commercial facility or the organization may have its own in-house records center. In either case, records in inactive storage must be retrievable. The benefits of inactive records storage are that it is lower-cost than storing the records in office areas and the records are protected and properly stored until they reach their final disposal date.
Once inactive records reach their disposition date and are authorized for destruction, the records management organization arranges for or carries out the destruction of the records. Destruction of proprietary records involves arranging for shredding, maceration, pulverization or some other form of destruction which prevents the dissemination of the information. Hard copy records without proprietary status can be recycled. Destruction of records should be documented. It is very important to be able to demonstrate that all records destruction is carried out in the normal course of business and that no records are arbitrarily destroyed. Once destruction is complete, the records life cycle is complete. This applies to all but a small percentage of records with archival value.

4.3 Archival Records

Archival records are those records which have enduring value to the organization. This value can be based on historical, cultural, research, business, or legal reasons. Because of the extended life-span of these records, archival records require preservation and/or conservation techniques to be followed in the storage containers and the storage facility. Such techniques include acid-free containers and temperature and humidity controls. The Records Management organization needs to identify archival records as part of the retention scheduling process and to ensure that they receive proper protection.

4.4 Vital Records and Disaster Recovery

Another area of special interest in the retention/disposition phase of the life cycle is the identification of vital records and preparations for disaster recovery. Vital records are those records that an organization would need in order to restart the business after experiencing a disaster. Disaster recovery, which includes the salvage of vital records, is the process of reconstructing the organization after a disaster. Special storage, usually off-site, is required to protect vital records from the same catastrophe that might befall the organization. The Records Management organization needs to identify the organization’s vital records; this can be done on Records Retention Schedules; and then ensure the duplication and dispersal of the actual records on a continuous basis. The benefit of a vital records protection program is that it can literally save the organization if a disaster actually occurs.

Records Management develops a disaster recovery plan that addresses the restoration of records in the event of a disaster. Initially, disaster recovery efforts will focus on recovery of vital records but will eventually address other records which were not classified as vital but that are recoverable and of use in restoring the business. The disaster recovery plan developed by Records Management will include more than a plan for the salvage of records. Disaster recovery plans should include a list of contacts in the Records Management organization and information on document restoration vendors. Some simple procedures for storing duplicate copies of records maintained on optical disk or any form of micrographics can mitigate the need to restore large
quantities of hard copy records. These methods include storage of a duplicate copy in an off-site commercial storage company and storage at other offices of the organization that are in a different geographical area.

5.0 SPECIAL ISSUES

This section covers two issues that don't fit neatly into the other categories, so we have called them "special" issues.

Privileged Records

Privileged records are defined as those records to which access is controlled due to statutory, legal, or security requirements. Examples are personnel records, attorney-client communications, attorney work products, and business proprietary records.

There is a tendency to keep privileged records separate from other records, and to process them differently. This is required only in uncontrolled situations where many people have access to the file station, in which case the only way to control access is to keep the files locked up and limit access to the key. In a centralized, staffed and controlled filing situation, it is actually better NOT to do anything different with such records, except limiting access as indicated according to the record type. If all the files have limited access, retrieval only by records staffed, and are locked up at night, it is more efficient to manage privileged records along with the regular work flow.

Records Management staff should ensure that privileged records are handled and disclosed only as indicated for that record and/or in accordance with law.

5.1 Copyrighted Materials

Copyright laws are of interest to Records Managers in the following instances: in cases where technical or scientific records are created that include cited references to other published materials that are copyrighted; in document control functions that often receive vendor materials that are copyrighted; in reprographics management; and in libraries.

Personnel responsible for handling copyrighted materials in any of these capacities should be familiar with the restrictions in the copyright law. Procedures should include instructions for handling copyrighted materials received.

Copyright laws apply to all copying media, such as photocopies, microfilm, and electronic images. Any statement concerning copyright or similar restrictions on reproduction or distribution should be taken at face value, i.e., personnel should assume that the copyright is valid and in effect.
If the copyrighted material was obtained through a purchase, refer to the purchase contract to determine if the supplier is entitled to a copyright restriction. If so, your procurement organization can request permission from the supplier to reproduce any copyrighted materials produced. If the purchase contract contains wording that waives the right of the source to apply copyright or reproduction restrictions, strike through the copy restriction statement and document the reason why; retain this documentation with the record copy or master file of the item.

If the copyright owner retains the privilege of invoking copyright or reproduction restrictions or if the copyrighted item was not obtained as a result of a purchase, the source can be contacted to obtain permission to reproduce the document. Sometimes copyrighted publications include such information on the publication itself. The release may require only a phone call; create documentation on this and keep it with the item.

If a copyright release is not granted by its owner, no copies can be made legally and the only option is to purchase additional copies of the item.

6.0 RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Managing a Records Management organization involves the same business activities that it takes to manage any line or staff organization; it involves planning, personnel recruitment and hiring, procurement, budgeting, professional development, and so on. There are some unique aspects of Records Management Program administration, however, and only those are addressed here.

6.1 Purchasing Records Management Systems and Equipment

Depending on the size of the organization, it is important to establish top-level polices and procedures that give the Records Manager a degree of control over purchases by other functional areas for records equipment and systems. This includes micrographics systems, filing equipment, and commercial storage. Ideally, the Records Manager is involved in these purchasing decisions, but in many dispersed or very large organizations, this is not possible. Sometimes the only way that the Records Manager even knows that Records Management related systems and equipment are being contemplated is through the Purchasing Department. Putting such a policy in place requires top management approval.

6.2 Recruitment of Records Management Staff

There are many sources for recruiting Records Management staff that were not available to us just a few years ago. One excellent source is: the Records Management listserv. Many jobs are advertised on this listserv. It reaches approximately 1,500 subscribers worldwide, and this number
is ever-growing. I don't know how successful organizations using this method have been in locating qualified individuals this way, but judging by the number of such notices on the listserv, it is being actively used for this purpose.

Another excellent source is local ARMA chapter newsletters. Most chapters have newsletters and most will take job ads at no cost. Many chapters also have employment liaisons who act as a clearinghouse for the chapter for individuals seeking employment and employers seeking applicants. ARMA International also has a job hotline where employers seeking Records Management staff advertise. This hotline is updated weekly; callers may call in at any time and listen to a recorded message on available positions.

6.3 Records Management Policies and Procedures

The usefulness of standardized policies and procedures is undisputed. Every Records Management organization should have them. They act as the main tool to ensure uniform application of Records Management practices in the organization, both by Records Management staff and by users of Records Management systems and services. Levels of such documents that should be developed range from high-level corporate policies and procedures to what our organization calls "desk-top" procedures that define and describe an individual Records Management worker's particular tasks, i.e., the job done at that desk.

6.4 Records Management Staff Training

One approach to administering Records Management staff training is to create a matrix for each position that lays out skill sets needed on one axis and training available in the organization on the other axis. Separate matrices of this type can be used to plan and prepare training and to track training completed. This simple method will reveal any gaps in available training and any skills lacking in an individual that will need to be addressed.

Even for an experienced Records Management professional, additional training is periodically needed. Our profession is in a constant state of change if for no other reason than there are constant changes in technology applications that we use in our work. Fortunately, ARMA offers us many educational opportunities, at the international, national, regional, and chapter levels. Even lower level staff can take advantage of local ARMA chapter activities that are inexpensive and accessible.

6.5 Program Assessment

Nearly every modern business process involves some form of assessment. There are many manifestations of this that we see around us today: TQM, business process reengineering,
continuous process improvement, business process improvement, ISO 9000 quality audits, internal audits, and so on. Records Management is no exception. There are generally two types of assessments; performance assessments where results are assessed, and compliance assessments where, obviously, compliance with policies and procedures are assessed. Some means of assessment should be carried out periodically.

Assessments are often done internally as a self-assessment by Records Management, or by internal auditors. One source of information is a series of self-assessment questionnaires published by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. These are free for the asking. Another interesting and useful form of assessment is to request a Records Manager from another organization, perhaps someone you know through ARMA, to come into your organization and perform an independent assessment. This can be done reciprocally and you can conduct assessments of each other’s organizations. This strategy offers a fresh and ideally, objective, look at your operation by someone familiar with your profession but not familiar with your operation, and with no vested interests.

6.6 Multiple Locations

Many Records Management operations function in an environment where there are multiple locations. This is true of international businesses, corporations with many locations and State and Federal government. In such organizations, the Records Management function may be centralized with a headquarters office setting policy and developing procedures, or decentralized with every site responsible for its own Records Management Program. Centralized programs tend to be more cost-effective because of the uniformity that can be achieved and avoidance of duplicate effort in developing multiple policies and procedures. The maximum use of computer resources can also be obtained in a centralized program. On the flip side, centralized programs are sometimes guilty of working in a vacuum and not understanding or appreciating the problems and conditions at the sites. The Records Manager responsible for a centralized program must be responsive to the working problems and needs at the sites for which they are responsible.

6.7 Professional Development

At this point in the conference, everyone is probably saturated with recommendations to pursue professional certification by testing to become a Certified Records Manager (C.R.M.). This is advice not to be ignored. More and more employers are asking for CRMs in job ads. With the number of CRMs on the increase, it will inevitably become difficult for non-CRMs to obtain the high-end jobs which are in short supply. While there are other Records Management-related certifications, such as Certified Archivist, the CRM certification is the generalist certification for Records Management professionals.
7.0 Conclusion

The book "The Records Management Handbook" by Ira Penn, Gail Pennix and Jim Coulson states:

"The life-cycle concept of records management is, like most theories, relatively valueless unless it is put to use. . . . all of the phases and all of the elements must be managed in a unified and coordinated manner if significant program effectiveness is to result. . . . The various records management elements all require planning, organizing, directing, and coordinating . . . ."

We couldn't agree more. The model presented today covers the three phases in the records life cycle and presents the Records Management program elements included in each one. If every Records Management program included all of these elements, the information age would be a lot less crazy for our organizations.

Since we're all a little crazy to be in this profession in the first place, we would like to leave you with a little something that symbolizes the life cycle model that we have presented today.
(Handout)

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